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SUBJECT: NORWAY DESK OFFICER VISITS OSLO

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On March 9 and 10, Norwegian desk officer Ray Dalland visited Oslo and held meetings with officials at the Norwegian Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs. Lack of significant progress in Norway's border delineation dispute with Russia in the High North, and the impact on future oil and gas production on the area, were points of discussion. Norway's future role in NATO and UN peacekeeping operations, including possible deployment in Darfur were topics in meetings at the Ministry of Defense.
END SUMMARY

MoD: Mil-Mil Coordination, Darfur, and Russian border
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¶2. (SBU) On March 9, Dalland, along with DAO Stevens and ConOff, met with Henning Vaglum, Head of Section, and Geir Myrseth, Commander (Senior Grade), both of the Transatlantic and European Security and Defense Policy section of the Ministry of Defense. While Vaglum stressed the importance of maintaining close cooperation and high visibility with Washington on defense matters, he also cautioned that there was so much cooperation on so many levels that overlap was beginning to become a problem. Both sides should ensure that appropriate work was being done by the appropriate working group. Vaglum also mentioned that Norway was considering deployment of 150 troops to Darfur, but that it had not been decided by the Cabinet and that once agreed to such a deployment would take nine months to implement.

¶3. (SBU) Ministry of Defense officials also discussed security concerns at High North oil and gas facilities and the lack of significant progress in long-running Barents Sea delineation discussions. Vaglum mentioned that NATO had in the past agreed, in principle, to provide security for oil and gas facilities in the High North should it be necessary. Turning to the Russia - Norway Barents border discussions, Vaglum reported that Norwegian meetings with Russian FM Lavrov resulted in no substantive progress in the current territorial dispute and that it "seemed the Russians weren't interested in cooperating" on energy and trade matters.

MFA: Bi-lateral High North Talks, Fisheries, and Oil
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¶4. (SBU) On March 10, Dalland, PolOff and ConOff met with Sverre Jervell, Senior Advisor for Northern Areas, Polar Affairs and Nuclear Safety. The only topic discussed was the High North. Jervell (who had been working the High North issue since the term was coined during the Cold War) told Dalland that he felt Washington's High North knowledge was "obsolete" and

too focused in the Pentagon and at the War College. When asked about the status of a proposed spring conference in Washington on the High North, Jervell replied that while things were still at the formative stage, his concept was to pull together experts from legal, political, economic, environment, industrial and military fields in the State Department to meet with Norwegian counterparts to address specific High North issues. He said that the issue of security in the High North, from the Cold War days, had turned to one of oil, economics and environment, this last point being critical to internal Norwegian politics.

15. (SBU) Regarding disputes with Russia over fisheries rights and Barents Sea boundaries, Jervell (protect) commented that current discussions were really all about oil. He, too, felt the Russians were not interested in resolving the matter any time soon. The longer the situation played out, the more it was to the Russians' advantage. Jervell said that to reach a solution on fisheries access and border delineation it was important to coordinate with the U.S. He feels coordination would not only benefit the U.S. economically, but would help Norway to better counter Russia's might. He reiterated that the boundary issue is key: "During the Cold War, there was only one issue, and the U.S. took care of it. Now, Norway is in the middle and we are not used to this game."

WHITNEY